

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 312820
ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 312820

STADIS////////////////////////////////////
EXDIS, FOR AMBASSADOR FROM DAY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWS

1. DEC 29 WASHINGTON POST CARRIED ARTICLE DATED
DAMASCUS DEC 28 REPORTING "OFFICIAL SOURCES" AS STATING
THAT SARG HAS "DECIDED TO LIFT ITS 28-YEAR-OLD RESTRICTIONS
ON JEWS AND RESTORE THEIR RIGHT TO TRAVEL...TO OWN PROPERTY
AND ENTER GOVERNMENT SERVICE." ARTICLE ALSO CITED KUWAITI
DAILY AL QABAS AS CLAIMING THAT SARG'S DECISION WAS BASED
ON FINDINGS OF A HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO EXAMINE
POSITION OF JEWS IN SYRIA, AND COMMENTING THAT HENCEFORTH
THEY "WILL BE TREATED AS ANY OTHER SYRIAN CITIZENS AND WILL
HAVE RIGHT TO MOVE FREELY WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND TRAVEL
ABROAD." AL QABAS ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING SARG'S DECISION
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PAGE 02 STATE 312820

"WRESTS FROM ISRAEL'S HAND THE CARD ALLEGING PERSECUTION
OF JEWS" IN SYRIA AND DESCRIBING IT AS A "NEW STEP IN THE
COORDINATED SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN PEACE OFFENSIVE" FOR A
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL.

2. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS AND ANY LIGHT YOU CAN

SHED ON FOREGOING, ASIDE FROM WHAT HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN CERTAIN RECENT MEMCONS. WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHETHER SARG IS MAKING SIMILAR INFO AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION IN DAMASCUS. WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE YOUR

ADVICE ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD PLAY THIS ISSUE IN RESPONDING TO ANTICIPATED PRESS AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES HERE. FOR THE MOMENT, WE ARE CONFINING OUR PRESS GUIDANCE TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

BEGIN TEXT:

QUESTION: DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE PRESS REPORT THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS RESTORED FULL CIVIL RIGHTS TO THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY?

ANSWER: WE DON'T HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THIS SPECIFIC REPORT; HOWEVER, I MIGHT ADD THAT WE ARE AWARE THAT THERE HAS BEEN IMPROVEMENT IN THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR MINORITY GROUPS, INCLUDING JEWS, IN SYRIA OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. WE, OF COURSE, WELCOME THIS TREND.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE EMIGRATION OF JEWS?

ANSWER: AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE SITUATION. -

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE SITUATION?

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PAGE 03 STATE 312820

ANSWER: JEWS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE. END TEXT.
ROBINSON

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